

# Hand, Foot & Mouth Disease

## Fact Sheet

### What is hand, foot and mouth disease?

Hand, foot and mouth disease (HFMD) is a common viral illness in infants and children who are 5 years and younger. It can also occur in adults. This disease can occur anywhere at any time; however, it is more frequent in the summer and early autumn months. It is not the same as Foot-Mouth Disease, which is only found in animals.

### How do you get hand, foot and mouth disease?

HFMD is spread through direct contact with nose and throat discharges of an infected person. It can also be spread through direct contact with blister fluid and feces of an infected person.

### What are the symptoms of hand, foot, and mouth disease?

- Sudden onset of fever
- Sore throat
- Bright red tonsils
- Small white blisters appear in the mouth 4-6 days after the onset of the illness
- Loss of appetite
- Sometimes nausea and vomiting
- Sores appear on palms, fingers, and soles of feet
- Sometimes no specific symptoms

One to two days after the fever begins, painful sores usually develop in the mouth. They begin as small red spots that blister and sometimes become ulcers. These sores usually show up on the tongue, gums, and inside the cheeks.

A skin rash may develop over 1-2 days with flat or raised red spots, some with blisters. The rash does not itch. The rash usually shows up on the palms of the hand and the soles of the feet. It may also show up on the knees, elbows, buttocks or genital area.

### How is hand, foot and mouth disease diagnosed?

A healthcare provider can diagnose HFMD clinically or through testing of throat discharge or stool specimen.

### How soon do symptoms occur?

People may get sick 3 to 7 days after being infected. The illness usually last about 7 to 10 days. Those infected with the HFMD are most contagious during the first week of being sick. However,

infected people can still spread the virus for weeks after becoming well.

### How is hand, foot and mouth disease treated?

There is no specific treatment for HFMD. Although, certain things can be done to relieve the symptoms, including:

- Taking over-the-counter medications to relieve pain and fever (**CAUTION: Aspirin should NOT be given to children**)
- Rest
- Avoid citrus juices
- Using mouthwashes or sprays that numb pain

### Call your Healthcare Provider

If anyone in your home has symptoms, please consult your healthcare provider.

### How can hand, foot, and mouth disease be prevented or controlled?

- Cover nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing and sneezing or cough/sneeze into your sleeve. Dispose of used tissues
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm water after using the bathroom, after changing diapers, after handling anything soiled with stool or secretions from the nose or mouth, and before preparing food or eating.

**Washing your hands thoroughly is the best way to prevent the spread of most communicable diseases.**

- **NOTE TO DAYCARE/SCHOOL STAFF:** Staff should closely monitor hand washing of all children after children have used the bathroom or have been diapered.
- Clean and disinfect diapering area and potty chairs after each use and bathroom toilets, sinks, and toys, at least daily and when soiled. Clean and sanitize mouthed toys, objects, and surfaces at least daily and when soiled.
- **NOTE TO PARENTS:** To prevent the spread of HFMD, parents should keep infected children at home from daycare or school till their fever breaks or a healthcare provider says it's safe.

*This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for talking with a healthcare provider. Call your healthcare provider if you have questions about HFMD.*